



Testimony of

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Public Health Committee  
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***HB 5384 An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels***

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Melodie Peters and I am the President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse union of nearly 29,000 members. We are proud to represent more healthcare workers in acute care hospitals than any other collective bargaining agent. It is on their behalf that I testify before you today in favor of BH 5384 An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels.

Safe nurse staffing levels help reduce medical errors, hospital infections and patient falls—all things that cost us lives. This bill simply asks hospitals to report their actual staffing ratios for each patient care unit, the number of Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Nurses Aides providing direct care to the Department of Public Health.

Hospitals know and keep track of staffing numbers on a daily basis, just like they keep track of their patient census. Submitting these numbers to the Department of Public Health would require little more than a few keystrokes. The question we need to ask is why don't they want them to be made public? Why do hospitals oppose this bill?

HB 5384 is not an onerous proposal. It does not require mandatory minimum staffing ratios. It does not define patient acuity or mandate staffing levels based on patient acuity. It is therefore upsetting to direct caregivers that the many of our hospitals have opposed this bill. Why the intense push back?

Numerous studies over the last twenty years have shown the direct correlation nurse staffing levels have on patient care. In fact, just last week, a three-year nursing workforce study conducted by RN4CAST, a consortium of investigators from 12 European countries, was released. The findings were published in *The Lancet*.

([http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)62631-8/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)62631-8/abstract))

The study, one of the largest to date, confirms that people die every day because there aren't enough nurses to care for them safely. It found that an increase in a nurse's workload by just one patient increased the likelihood of an inpatient dying within 30 days of admission by seven percent. And in many hospitals, funding cuts and the resulting layoffs of nurses have only made

the crisis worse. The reporting required in HB 5384 would provide the information we need to ensure that all patients receive the high-quality, lifesaving care they deserve.

We also suggest that this bill be amended to require hospitals to post this information on their own websites in addition to reporting to the Department of Public Health, as this level of transparency is good for healthcare consumers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I urge you to make healthcare more transparent by supporting HB 5384.